

Weekly Bureau of Information for All Who Till the Soil or Are Interested in Making Homes

AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT

All inquiries and communications addressed to The Times-Dispatch will receive prompt attention. This department will appear each Monday, and contributions or suggestions will be welcomed.

Facts for Farmers, Stock Breeders, Poultry Raisers, Orchardists, Truckers and Gardeners—Queries and Answers

COMMON FLIES, THE DISEASE PEDDLERS

Sanitation, better sanitation, is the great need in the country to-day. In small towns and farm districts, where no attention is given to sanitation, not even for the fly-proofing of outdoor closets, every chance is given for flies to gather infectious germs. The same rules to fly control must be applied in both the city districts and the country. "Swat the fly" campaigns and the use of flytraps, while serving a valuable end in arousing public opinion, will never reach the root of the evil. They are like the medicine which the doctor prescribes to relieve the painful symptoms of a disease. We have reached the stage in fly control when we are ready to prescribe not for the symptoms, but for the causes of the trouble. We must destroy the flies before they get wings; or, better still, we must prevent flies from breeding at all.

Fully 95 per cent of the house flies come from horse manure. It is a gross mistake to believe that all manure is piled directly to the fields, not left in place to become breeding spots for flies. This involves no hardship for the farmer, because, by spreading the manure directly he saves all of the most valuable fertilizing elements. Swat the fly by abolishing the manure pile.

The common house fly is at once the most dangerous of all insects and the most dangerous to mankind. One fly carrying, as it can, millions of deadly bacteria upon its person, may, and frequently does, bring the most terrible plagues in its flight. It is a gross distributor of the germs of typhoid fever, dysentery and tuberculosis.

Millions are spent every year in fighting the last named disease. Public and private sanitariums for its prevention, treatment or cure exist in many places. The contagious character of the disease is now well known and patients are properly isolated, but it is not profitably spent.

A Covered Manure Receptacle Is Necessary Wherever the Manure Cannot Be Taken Away Every Day.

It is a fact that many thousands of victims having tuberculosis in a more or less advanced stage still live with their families and do not know it. They are associates as they did before the disease attacked them.

With many such the spitting habit is common and continual. With criminal carelessness, and they are careless, this habit, and local ordinances seem powerless to prevent the dangerous practice. Between such diseased persons and the otherwise healthy world, the fly is an able and persistent spreader of tuberculosis germs. Feeding as it does on liquid and semi-liquid, defecated matter, in which the germs lurk, it moves off carrying the dangerous bacteria to the persons and homes of others.

Whatever it touches it contaminates. It goes naturally to any food exposed to its flight in unsecured and unprotected houses, and it is not until a few seconds upon what is to be eaten it may leave there germs enough to kill the whole family.

Every careful householder will see that his home is properly screened. In spite of this precaution flies will invade houses. Should they do so no mercy must be shown them. They should be killed wherever found. There is no telling from whence they have come, but one thing is certain, they have come from no clean place. There is not one chance in a million that they have not come from a manure pile, a garbage can or a stable room.

And their heads and feet are the most perfect collectors of filth and germs ever devised. The former are provided with a profusion of hairs and bristles, while the feet are provided with even a better degree of collecting power.

Graduate filth of all kinds and there will be an end to the fly as a pest and carrier of disease. If we have a stringent law covering the disposal of stable manure and garbage, every one with the slightest interest in his own or his neighbor's welfare should see that his premises are free from accumulations of these breeding places for flies. A little vigilance will prevent the pests from incubating. Without the conveniences they now have they will diminish by the million each day.

Land Clearing Helps. In clearing my timber land of underbrush I only left what I considered of some use at the present time or in the near future. Small brush that would not make a fence post within a few years I dug out and destroyed. Crooked or ill-looking trees I cut down and made into wood.

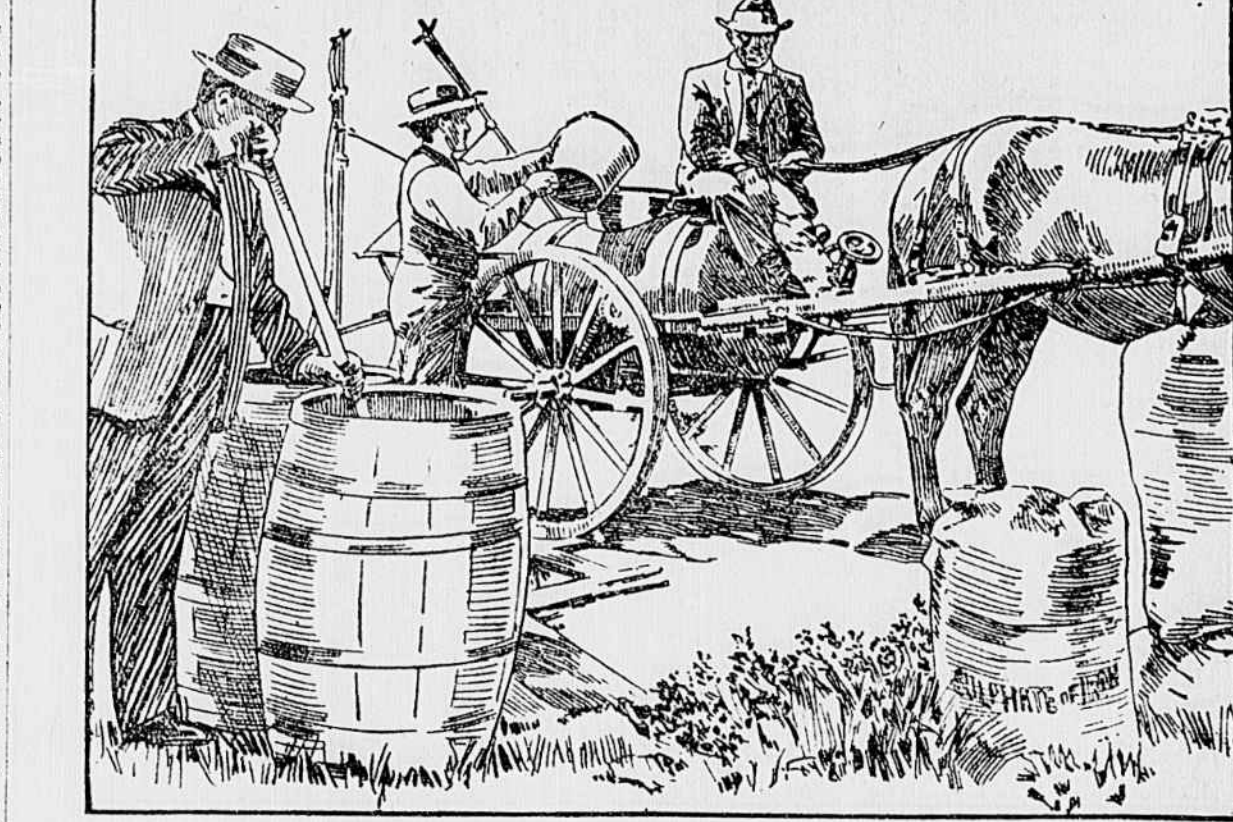
Old logs that had been lying in their places for years I cut up, rolled them together and burned, always being very careful not to get them too near a profitable tree for fear of damaging it by the fire. It is the fire.

In this way I have made my woods pasture the most beautiful spot on my farm and many other farmers could do as I have with their timber land and not only benefit their trees, but by benefiting themselves as well by pasturing this land that otherwise will grow up in worthless bushes—L. G. Johnston, Laketon, Ky.

Don't Burn Your Cornstalks. In former years many farmers actually burned the cornstalks that were left on the ground during the winter, especially on the bottom land. This very wasteful habit has been stopped by many of our farmers, but some still practice this old-time, unhygienic habit. No farmer can afford to burn any kind of vegetable or forage material except noxious weeds or to destroy insects.

All plant food when it decays forms humus, which will improve any soil. You cannot make a soil rich without this humus. A ton of cornstalks contains more than 20 worth of plant food, to say nothing of its humus-making value. If the stalks are in the way on the bottom land, haul them to a thin spot in some other field. Don't burn anything that will decay and improve your land.

Trash in the Orchard. The trash in the orchard, clean, applied to what may be thrown upon it as well as to what may grow upon it. When pruning and working over the trees don't leave the trash and rubbish to remain where it falls. Dead branches, old bark and even prunings of new wood may and usually do contain egg masses of insects, hibernating larvae, spores of fungi, etc. When the work of pruning is done,



MAKING IRON SULPHATE AND FILLING SPRAYER TANK.

make a thorough cleaning up, and if you go to the trouble of sweeping up and burning the loose bark that has fallen to the ground, your time will not be profitably spent.

Poultry Pointers.

Chickens have no sense of affection for their owners, but they will repay kindness of warm, dry quarters and good food and clean water by laying more eggs. A hen is all business.

A hopper full of bran placed where the hens can get at it at all times is an excellent addition to the food.

While it is desirable, it is not always necessary to start in the chicken business with a flock of pure-breds. Buy the best hens you can afford and then spend as much more as you can afford for a pure-bred cock.

On the Lawn.

A good lawn is secured by sowing a thorough well-prepared, rich soil with forty-two pounds of pure Kentucky blue grass, five pounds solid red-top, and three pounds of white clover per acre. Sow as soon as the land can be well prepared, rake the seed in well, and roll lightly.

The shrews frequent underground burrows and surface runways and may occasionally be seen traveling openly over the ground in fields and woods, evidently in search of food. They are active both night and day and do not hibernate. When frightened, or while engaged in fighting with other animals, or occupied in family altercations, they emit a strong, disagreeable odor. This odor evidently renders them distasteful in a measure to other predaceous mammals and birds, as shrews are frequently killed by them and left unscathed.

My attention was first attracted to the economic value of the shrews several years ago this spring. At that time I was making a study of insects that feed on nuts of various kinds and, in working out the histories of several species, I found it desirable to add to my supply of "chestnut worms," "hickory nut worms" and "acorn worms." During the previous fall I had had no trouble in finding large numbers of these worms in the ground beneath nut-bearing trees, where they had gone to hibernate and to transform later into mature insects. In making a search in similar locations in the spring, I found that

Diagram Showing Burrows Used by Short-Tailed Shrews in Searching for Insect Food. The Burrows Occurred Under a Chestnut Tree in the Woods.

there remained only a very small percent of the number that was known to have entered the ground in the fall, the missing ones having evidently been devoured by some small animal whose burrows traversed the ground beneath the trees in every direction.

Several mouse traps were set in these burrows and in less than a week more than twenty short-tailed shrews were caught under a single chestnut oak tree. While in confinement some of the shrews would feed ravenously on the worms supplied them. One ate seventy-two large chestnut worms in less than five minutes.

The interest awakened by these and many other similar observations led me to inquire more fully into the habits and general characteristics of these small mammals. The economic status of the shrews depends largely upon the quality of food which they consume. They are known to feed largely on insects and mice, and have, therefore, been designated by nearly all writers as being highly beneficial. This designation is most likely entirely proper, and yet the probability that the shrews also feed on beneficial insects and birds' eggs and fledglings should not be lost sight of.

In disposition the shrews are nervous, ill-tempered and rapacious. They do not hesitate to attack animals larger than themselves and in confinement will kill and devour their fellows.

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BRIEF NOTES THOUGHT OUT BY THE WAYSIDE

The silo stands for improvement.

Overfeeding the dairy cows is worse than underfeeding.

Heavy cream makes better quality of butter than thin cream.

The man with an apple orchard will make money by the careful pruning of his trees.

Sow smooth peas, onions, and radishes as soon as the ground can be worked easily.

Set out a good bed of asparagus. If well planted, it will be good for many years without renewal.

To grow a good crop of onions requires rich soil, free from weeds, and thorough cultivation.

Nothing is gained by putting the seed in before the seed bed is dry enough to be worked up well.

Most soils, if worked when they are wet, pack and afterwards bake. Seeds in a hard-baked soil grow with difficulty.

A good stand of clover and timothy is usually secured on corn land that has not been plowed, but has been carefully disked in preparation for the grain crop.

You will find it is a much pleasanter method of attacking the weeds than the hacking of the old sort.

In transplanting lettuce or other soft foliage plants, do not set too deep. If you do, the water is likely to collect in the lower leaves and cause them to decay.

Nasturtiums will do well in almost any soil; but if they are planted on very rich soil, too much growth of vine results at the expense of flowers.

If you set hens be sure to give them clean nests and keep them clean. The nests and the hens, too, may very well be dusted with good insect powder.

Clean up all the fence rows and corners. Decaying weeds and vegetation form splendid places for the breeding of insects and pests. All such trash should be raked together and burned.

In the maintenance of the brood sows we have our best opportunities to make use of pasturage, waste feeds, fallen fruits, etc. Not that these things are sufficient, but because roughage, range, bulk, succulence and variety are all good for the sows.

The Orchard Location. The north side of a hill is the best location for an orchard, because changes in temperature are not so great as elsewhere. On south slopes

the buds start too early in the spring, cold air descends in hollows and closed valleys, and is likely to kill the young buds. An orchard near a lake or large pond is not likely to be injured by frosts, because the water tends to make the temperature more even.

Care of the Lawn. Cut the edges of the drives and walks. Remember the damage done by wheels that have encroached on the lawn during the winter.

If the lawn was not enriched in the fall, be sure to fertilize it the middle or the last of this month. Wood ashes, bone meal, nitrate of soda, and pulverized sheep manure—especially the first two—are good on the lawn.

Feeding Young Calves. Rations quite rich in protein should be fed because the calves are growing very fast during the first six months of their lives and in order to keep them thrifty and healthy and supply their systems what is needed to produce a well-rounded, smooth, thick-fleshed animal they must be fed an abundance of the very best kind of food.

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